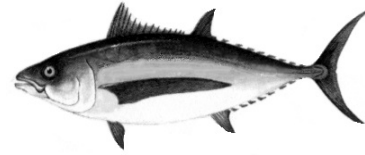


WESTERN FISHBOAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION



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April 16, 2012

Ambassador David A. Balton
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries – OES
U.S. Department of State
2201 "C" Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520
Via Email: BaltonDA@state.gov

Re: Western Fishboat Owners Association Statement on Status of U.S./Canada Albacore Treaty

Dear Ambassador Balton:

On April 2, 2012 Western Fishboat Owner's Association (WFOA) released the following statement included in text below regarding the status of the U.S./Canada albacore treaty and it's presently suspended "fishing regime" under the treaty.

WFOA is concerned from the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) reporting that Canadian officials have met with a small group of Council members and staff, and that additional visits are planned with west coast state fisheries agency personnel. WFOA finds it extraordinary that meetings are taking place between representatives of a foreign government with organizations that have an advisory role in the treaty process in the absence of key stakeholder groups most affected by the Treaty. WFOA believes this circumvents the here-to-fore transparent process involving all stakeholders. These meetings between this delegation and processors, coastal business, congressional representatives, and members of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council while informative to all, have most likely increased confusion between U.S. stakeholders and agencies involved in the negotiations.

We understand there are a number of meetings scheduled over the next two weeks, including those with senior Canadian and U.S. Officials to take place in Washington, D.C. and ongoing communication between Provincial and Federal Governments in Canada, as well as Provincial and State governments on the West coast. WFOA remains skeptical of what might be discussed and the outcomes without industry input. Thus, WFOA expresses our concerns as representative to nearly 400 fishing vessels and businesses on the west coast in anticipation of any discussions involving treaty and fishing under the treaty in the future.

WFOA's statement is as follows:

"Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) supports the apparent 2012 suspension of the "fishing regime" under the US/Canada Albacore treaty. The fishing regime is contained in Annex "C" of the treaty. Suspension in the absence of a new agreement for 2012 and beyond does not terminate the treaty. Termination is a separate process outlined in the treaty requiring a letter from the government requesting such.

However, we believe suspension offers a unique opportunity to reexamine the treaty and its components in light of changes that have occurred in the fishery since it came into force 31 years ago. WFOA finds that there needs to be refinement in the data collection process, and that both nations need to harmonize data collection. Also, there needs to be an examination of catch determination, capacity, and the economics of the fishery as influenced by the Treaty.

Albacore fishing will occur in 2012 for the US and Canadian fleets. The only difference is that they do not have reciprocal fishing rights within national EEZs. Canadian vessels will not be shut out of the opportunity to fish. They have full access to the Canadian EEZ where albacore is abundant at times, and to international waters beyond 200 miles where in the past good catches have occurred.

WFOA believes that the North Pacific albacore fishery has entered a new stage of management that requires that the U.S. and Canadian fleets to reassess long-standing practices in light of the growing interest in the management and harvest of the resource. We feel the fishermen of both countries are better served by the governments taking the time to rationally work through issues rather than rushing into a new regime without accurate data and based on ill considered proposals to solve problems on the fishing grounds within the US EEZ. We find it preferable to have the fishermen fish in their own EEZs and on the high seas.

The treaty that has existed for 31 years has not caught up with the times and needs modifications. WFOA hopes we can come to a reasonable agreement that will improve management and be a vehicle for mutual cooperation in research and management that allows the fleets of both nations to be a stronger presence in the international management process.

WFOA does not believe a suspension should encourage each nation to take negative action on issues such as port unloading privileges and transit by vessels through national waters while the fishing regime is being revised. Such actions could be counterproductive for any long term solution resulting in a fair and equitable fishing regime." - Board of Directors - WFOA

In addition, members of the U.S. albacore fleet, are extremely concerned and increasingly feel that they have been left outside the process and their concerns are going to be lost in a general political fisheries exchange. What they see as attempts to circumvent the process will only solidify a general opposition to any future treaty development. Thus, we strongly support a suspension through at least 2012 to help solve the problems in a reasonable manner that are equitable to U.S. albacore fishermen. Any rush at this late stage may only lead to even worse problems on the fishing grounds in 2012.

We think it is good that a national level meeting between the principle fisheries agencies is proposed to occur shortly in Washington, D.C. We truly hope, the focus of this meeting could be on the several science, catch accounting, and other management concerns. The operational problems that occur on the grounds and the complex issues of the current impasse is best addressed with full industry participation.

Sincerely,



Wayne Heikkila
Executive Director

cc: Governor Christine Gregoire - WA
Governor John Kitzhaber - OR
Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Diane Feinstein
U.S. Representative Mike Thompson
U.S. Representative Wally Herger
U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio
U.S. Representative Rick Larsen
U.S. Representative Norm Dicks
U.S. Representative Jamie Herrera Beutler
Mark Helvey – NOAA/NMFS
Dave Hogan, U.S. Dept of State